

Tips for Provider Messaging on Safe Firearm Storage

Context: Patient-provider counseling on safe firearm storage during clinic visits is an important strategy to potentially reduce firearm-related injuries among children and teens⁴. Many families feel comfortable discussing firearm safety with their child's pediatrician¹. A combination of just-in time education from a trusted provider and a free safety device to take home can increase confidence of how to use the safety device and likelihood that the safety item will be used^{2,3}.

Terminology: We've found that use of the term "firearm" is generally preferred over "gun" because it comes across as less political⁵.

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1. Make it a practice to **screen all families** about access to firearms⁴.

 2. Approach the conversation around safe firearm storage just **like any other injury prevention topic** (e.g., car seats, bike helmets, life jackets) and **provide context** for your questions and recommendations^{5,6,7}.
 - a. Focus on kids being **smart and curious** (but not emotional) and avoid labels⁷.
 - b. **Start with an open-ended question** to engage safety interest, and encourage dialogue.
 - c. Firearm ownership may be due to longstanding **beliefs and values**; remember everyone will come with **different experiences**.⁸
 - d. Remind families that information is **confidential** unless there is an immediate emergency.

 3. Assess access to firearms in each relevant household (e.g., a teen may spend time in more than one parents' or relatives' household)⁹.
 - a. **Ask explicitly** if firearms in the home are **safely stored** (i.e., locked up, unloaded, ammunition stored separately). Ask parents/caregivers to consider if firearms are in **other homes** where their child or teen spends time.¹⁰ *Note: approximately 42% of adults report that there is a firearm in their household (nationally)*¹¹.
 - i. *Example:* "We understand many households have firearms and I'd like to talk about options for storing firearms to help keep your kids safe".
 - ii. *Example:* "Tell me about the firearms in your home".
 - b. Reminder that hidden or "off-limits" is not safe^{9,12}.
 - c. You can share your own family rules as a conversation starter.
 - d. If quick access to the firearm is important, discuss there are safe storage options that meet this requirement.
 - e. Encourage parents and caregivers to ask about firearm storage in the homes that their kids visit¹³.

 4. Temporarily removing firearms from the home is encouraged if a family member is depressed, suicidal or abusing drugs or alcohol⁹.
 - a. **Sympathize** with those who find the option of living without a firearm at home, even temporarily, very difficult⁹

 5. When the conversation is approached with **neutrality, privacy, respect and confidence**, it is generally well received by firearm-owning families^{14,15}.
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¹ Simonetti et al., 2018

² Rowhani-Rahbar et al., 2016

³ Uspal et al., 2020

⁴ Pallin et al., 2019

⁵ Baca, 2016

⁶ Herzog, 2016

⁷ Nguyen, 2016

⁸ UC Davis

⁹ Means Matter

¹⁰ Healthychildren.org

¹¹ Pew Research Center, 2017

¹² Baxley & Miller, 2006

¹³ The ASK Campaign, 2015

¹⁴ Ruelas, 2019

¹⁵ Parent, 2016